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ABSTRACT

In spring 1984, a study was conducted at Mercer County Community College (MCCC) in Trenton, New Jersey, to determine the difference between the quality of academic advisement for day and evening students. At the time of the study, MCCC enrolled approximately 10,500 full- and part-time students. One-third of these students attended day sessions, and two-thirds attended evening sessions. Students were surveyed in randomly selected day and evening classes to determine their perceptions and expectations of advisors' specific functions and roles; to gather information concerning their contacts with their advisor; and to solicit open-ended comments. Study findings, based on responses from 430 day students and 171 evening students, included the following: (1) only 16% of both day and evening students met three times or more with their academic advisors; (2) 59.4% indicated that the college catalog was the most valuable source of information for selecting courses, compared with 11% who considered the advisor to be the most helpful information source; (3) 35% of the day students and 27% of the evening students felt their advisor was approachable and easy to talk to; (4) 77% of the day students and 64% of the evening students indicated that their advisor was available and on time for appointments most or all of the time; and (5) 58% of the evening students reported that their advisor rarely or never assisted them in exploring occupational or professional plans. The survey instrument is appended. (AJL)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT AS PERCEIVED BY DAY AND EVENING STUDENTS

APPLIED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
AND EVALUATION

BY

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A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

An abstract of a research practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment for the requirments of Doctor of Education.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT AS PERCEIVED BY DAY AND EVENING STUDENTS

by

Jeanette J. Purdy, M. A.
April, 1985

The purpose of this study was to determine the significant difference between the quality of academic advisement as reported by students who attend college during day hours and those who attend during evening hours.

The study was conducted at Mercer County Community College, Trenton, New Jersey, during the spring semester of 1984.

For collection of data, a survey instrument of the perceptions of academic advisement was developed, field tested, and distributed using a systematic random sampling technique. Responses were returned by 338 day students and 263 evening students.

The hypothesis for the study was: There is no significant difference between the quality of academic advisement as reported by students who attend college during the day and those who attend during evening hours.

Findings revealed that the evening students reported a significant difference in two of the eight forced-choice

questions; namely, (1) the advisor discusses my goals and progress towards those goals, and (2) the advisor assists in exploring occupational and/or professional plans. The evening students responded significantly different from the day students in these two areas. Responses of the evening students were in a direction which was not expected, thereby indicating a greater degree of satisfaction than day students. In all other cases, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of day or evening students regarding academic advisement.

The open-ended question on the survey revealed three areas of concern which were reported by both day and evening students: (1) There seems to be a lack of concern for advisees on the part of advisors. (2) There appears to be insufficient time allotted for faculty to advise students effectively, and (3) There seems to be a considerable amount of misadvisement being done by faculty advisors.

Recommendations based on the findings were suggested to the Mercer County Community College for consideration. Among these were the development of an in-service training workshop for advisors, a peer advising program, and the establishment of a tangible reward system for those individuals involved directly in the advisement process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Academic advisement has not been a very popular subject at many institutions of higher learning. Historically, advisement has been an unpleasant, unrewarding task performed apathetically by those involved. More recently, however advisement has become a major priority among college-wide objectives resulting from declining enrollments, decreases in financial resources and retrenchment of professional staff. Attitudes toward academic advisement are beginning to change, however, viewing it as a viable tool for student retention. National and local conferences, regional seminars, workshops and task forces have organized across the country to address advisement concerns. A new professional organization, the National Academic Advisement Association (NACADA), has also been formed recently.

To reflect the attitudinal changes toward advising, Grites (1979) states that a new definition describes academic advisement as "a decision-making process during which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor." This study is an attempt to evaluate the advisement program at the community college level.

Mercer County Community College is committed to ensure high quality educational programs and services to meet the

the needs of a broad heterogeneous full-time and part-time student population. Included in this philosophy is an active academic advisement and counseling program.

Presently, the College employs approximately 129 full-time faculty members. Current enrollment figures reveal a total of approximately 10,500 full-and part-time students — one-third attending day sessions and two-thirds attending evening sessions. Given those figures, the role of the academic advisor is a very critical one in attempting to address the problem of retention. Student and faculty interaction can have a positive influence upon a student's perception and expectation of the college environment. For various reasons, those perceptions and expectations are not always compatible. The advisor is in a unique position to clarify goals, misconceptions and attitudes for the student. In addressing this situation, Woolridge (1982) believes that:

> since an ever-increasing number of entering freshmen across the nation demonstrate deficiencies in one or more of the basic skills, advising can help in reducing the large percentage of students leaving colleges during the first year of study.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to determine the quality of academic advisement based on student perceptions and to provide appropriate recommendations based on the results.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The academic advisement system at Mercer County Community College has undergone much change in the last five years in response to the findings generated by the Student Success Week Activities in 1979. The recommendation emanating from the final report in 1979 indicated that the problem of poor advisement was a major frustration experienced by students and was a major factor in attrition.

All matriculated students at Mercer are assigned to a faculty advisor. The basic purpose of the program is to assist the students in making sound academic decisions that will affect their educational objectives. Subordinate objectives include assisting the students in defining clear educational goals, understanding the College's policies and procedures and in developing habits and attitudes that will help students grow personally and professionally.

Faculty advisors are encouraged to meet individually with all assigned advisees during the semester. Advisors are not encouraged to provide extensive advise or counsel to students regarding personal or financial problems. The counseling staff is available for these purposes.

Many students at Mercer are invariably faced with the problem of not knowing the name of their advisors, being placed in courses without advisor assistance, not following matriculation procedures and not always finding the advisor accessible during the scheduled office hours.

Although academic advising is a part of every faculty member's professional responsibility, its significance and role in the retention of students has not been sufficiently emphasized at the College. Because the process of advisement has typically been an administrative task of course selection, there has been no training of advisors or release from advising responsibilities of those who are ineffective or have no desire to be advisors. Many faculty members, with a ratio of 20-30 students per instructor, view the advisement process as an added burden without compensation or recognition and therefore, are somewhat inclined to perform this task in a rather perfunctory manner. Moore (1976) concludes that "faculty advisors appear to define their role and restrict their student cortacts to a narrow range of academic topics and concerns." Mash (1978) feels that "in too many cases a 'successful' advising system consists of an advisor telling a student he must take specific courses in a particular sequence in order to fulfill requirements and graduate on time." McKinney and Hartwig (1981) in a study of student-advisor perceptions found that a number of aversive consequences faced advisors who spend too much time advising students since this meant time was taken from research (upon which promotions, pay raises and tensure were based).

To what extent faculty advisors should be accountable is highly speculative. According to Stickle (1982) "advise-

ment programs are not monitored as adequately as they could be. There is no attempt on the part of the administration to regulate or assess the effectiveness of faculty advising."

Kramer (1981) believes that:

> the reason faculty are understandably cool about the notion of advising is that they perceive advisement as neither important for professional advancement nor support the satisfaction of many basic needs. This stems, in part, from a lack of consensus among academicians on the philosophical issue of the fundamental necessity of faculty advising.

While much of the relevant literature seems to perpetuate the negative attitudes of faculty advisors toward advising the findings of Biggs, et al and Crockett appear to be diametrically opposed to those views. Biggs, Broadie and Barnhart (1975) discovered that in general,

> most academic advisors are satisfied with their work as an advisor and view themselves as appropriate sources of help in academic and vocational guidance; however, a substantial percentage is dissatisfied with the amount of recognition they receive.

A similar point of view comes from Crockett (1981). He contends:

> Faculty advising systems have emerged because faculty are interested in advising and perceive advising as an important role. They feel they are the most appropriate persons to guide students in course selection, are the most knowledgeable individuals to provide academic information and that students want advice from faculty.

Perhaps one of the major problems with academic advisement is that the role of the faculty advisor has been nonde-

script; that is, lacking distinctive or interesting qualities. It has been a task that required no preparation nor training.

Many faculty tend to draw a line of demarcation between advisement and counseling, thereby feeling justified for their not-too-closely involved status. As a result they are often reluctant to step outside of the role of "information booth." Walsh (1979) envisions three specific functions of the academic advisor that must nullify this concept:

> Advisors must learn to play some unaccustomed roles, among them counselor, advocate and guardian. Advisors need some background in counseling theory and must learn counseling approaches and techniques.

Is there an implication in the statement that advisors will have to be responsible for discussing students' feelings, emotions and personal problems? Grites (1979) suggests that:

> those involved with the academic development of students must also be cognizant of their social, personal and emotional development. Advisors cannot be expected to serve as therapists, but they should become more aware of certain behaviors, conditions that suggest student psychological concerns and of appropriate referral sources.

With the expansion of individualized programs, increased career options, a more diversified student body --- older adults, minority, disadvantage, unemployed and other nontraditional persons --- the role of the advisor will become more of helping students synthesize their academic, career and life goals. Advisors will need to develop certain basic competencies in order to interface effectively with all types of

students. Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) revealed that "the more frequent the informal contact with the faculty, the more positive student achievement and intellectual gains and the less likely the student is to voluntarily leave the institution." Grites (1981) found significant results to support the attitude that students expect both accurate information and interpersonal relationships from faculty, particularly through the advising process. While the length of the advising relationship was found insignificant, the quality of the advising relationshp was significant. Walsh (1979) suggests that in the final analysis "advisors need the ability to enhance decision making in addition to the so-called helping skills; such as listening, reflecting and interviewing."

Based on the conclusions drawn from recent literature, the process of academic advising will play a significant role in student retention in the future. It is evident that faculty are in an advantageous position to assist students in making a satisfactory college adjustment. It is further evident that rapport between faculty and students outside the classroom can have a salutary impact upon student success as faculty develop facility in clarifying both values and skills.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine the significant difference in the quality of academic advisement as reported by students who attend college during daytime hours and those who attend during evening hours. The major research question included the following:

> Is there a significant difference in the quality of academic advisement as reported by students who attend college during daytime hours and those who attend during evening hours.

The t test for comparison of means --- independent samples --- was used to test for any significant differences between the two sample groups. The following hypothesis was tested:

> There is no significant difference between the quality of academic advisement as reported by students who attend college during the day and those who attend during the evening hours.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined to assist in the understanding of the study:

1. Faculty Advisor. A full-time faculty member responsible for assisting students in planning course schedules, identifying problems encountered in enrolled courses and meeting graduation requirements on a planned timetable.

2. Full-Time Student. A student enrolled for 12 or more credits or equivalent during a semester.

3. Part-Time Student. A student who is enrolled for 11 or fewer credits or equivalent during a semester.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following is a list of limitations which may have an adverse effect on the findings of the study:

1. Nonmatriculated students are not assigned to a faculty advisor. They receive academic advisement from the counseling staff.

2. Students who are meeting academic requirements from another institution may need only one or two courses from Mercer. These students may not engage the assistance of an advisor.

3. Students whose past experiences may arouse negative attitudes toward an advisor (i.e. grade deficiencies, etc.).

4. Students who do not meet periodically with an advisor except during the selection of courses at registration time.

5. Students who depend on peer advisement or who drop courses prior to (or without) seeing an advisor.

6. Students who rely on information from adjunct faculty who may not be totally familiar with college policies and procedures.

7. Students who cannot differentiate between the role of the academic advisor and that of the professional counselor.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions can be made regarding the study:

1. There is an urgent need for a strong faculty advisement program at Mercer County Community College.

2. It can be assumed that both groups of students (day and evening) have equal access to the same faculty advisors and programs of study provided they have matriculated.

3. It can be assumed that the students in this study are reasonably homogeneous in that they have equal opportunity to achieve the same standards.

4. Students relate differently to faculty advisors who have a high interest in advising than to faculty who have a limited interest in advising.

CHAPTER II

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERATURE

In review of the related research and literature, information relating to this study was collected from a variety of sources including the Journal of College Student Personnel, Personnel and Guidance Journal, National Academic Advisement Association Journal, Research in Higher Education, College Board Review, Community/Junior College Quarterly, ERIC Data Search and Dissertation Abstracts.

There seems to be a shortage of studies pertaining to students' perceptions of academic advisement. Much of the research in this area deals with faculty evaluations and perceptions of advising. However, the literature did produce studies with relevant information in varying degrees. The most impressive was Stickle's (1982) Analysis of Faculty and Student Perceptions of Faculty Advising. Stickle's test for the difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies was computed to compare faculty and student responses. Significant differences at the .001 level between faculty and student responses were shown in four areas: assisting with exploring occupational and professional plans, discussing the program of general education, assisting with exploring academic problems and discussing occupational and professional plans. Faculty consistently rated their effectiveness higher than students rated faculty effectiveness in advising.

The value of such evaluations between students and faculty suggest that valuable information and feedback can be accrued from this method. It also provides a framework whereby administration and faculty are able to ascertain student needs in terms of academic achievement. Students who receive motivation from advisors sensitive to their educational needs will more readily influence their success in positive ways.

In a similar study Borgard and Hornbuckle (1977) discovered that faculty members rated themselves somewhat equal in their roles as teachers and as advisors. Students rated advisors higher according to advisors' knowledge of campus regulations and according to the number and length of advising sessions held. The remaining results found significant in this study support the notion that students expect both accurate information and interpersonal relationship from faculty, particularly through the advising relationahip. The need for interpersonal relationships was indicated by the significance in student ratings according to the length and number of advising sessions and the contacts or desire for contacts with advisors.

The need for clarifying relationships among faculty and students was evident in these research studies and could give valuable insight into the area of student attrition and/or retention.

Sanborn and Taylor (1975) studied relationships between faculty interest in advising activities and nine selected com-

munity college student advising experiences. The results of the study indicated that the degree of interest a faculty member has in advising did not affect the way in which he/she advises students. These findings were especially significant in answering the question, "who should do faculty advising." An examination of the data revealed that no significant difference existed between the advising activities of those advisors who were more interested and those who were less interested in advising. The implication here is that faculty interest alone does not determine the quality of advising. There are advisors who lack proper training in this area but at the same time they are very interested in the task. This is an opportunity, however, to identify those who are interested, train them and provide additional compensation of some kind: reduced teaching load, a monetary reward or release time from other ancillary obligations.

Biggs, Broadie and Barnhardt (1975) concluded from their study that advisors view themselves as appropriate sources of help for a large number of student problems. Most view themselves as effective sources of help with academic and vocational guidance problems. However, advisors differ in their views about their roles as appropriate persons to whom students should bring either social or emotional concerns. This study contradicts the prevailing attitude that academic advising is the albatross for a majority of college faculty.

However, many are dissatisfied with the lack of recognition they receive for advising efforts. The implication is that institutions who want to upgrade the status of their advisement system and who want to encourage quality time and effort ought to investigate and evaluate various forms of compensation for advisors.

In summary, the research cited has not had a pervasive affect on the attitudes of educators concerning academic advisement to any appreciable degree.

Therefore, before a definitive conclusion can be reached based on the literature, further research is needed by educators at all levels of the community college for the purpose of evaluating and improving the advisement system.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

Procedures for Collecting Data. The following method was used in assembling the data for this study:

This experiment was conducted at Mercer County Community College during the spring semester, 1984. A population of approximately 300 daytime and 300 evening students were sampled systematically by utilizing a table of random numbers assigned to the list of course section numbers. The spring 1984 class roster, prepared by the Admissions and Student Records Office, provides a numerical listing of all courses by section number. (The section number indicates the day, hour and location of each course offered by the institution). The student sample also represented the seven academic divisions within the College.

Survey forms were generated during regular recitation periods for the students to evaluate the quality of academic advisement they had received since entering the College. The survey form, designed with assistance from the Institutional Research staff of the College, consisted of a total of 14 items: eight of the items involved student perceptions toward the specific functions and role expectations of the advisor (4 = all the time, 3 = most of the time, 2 = rarely and 1 = not at all). Five of the items related to the enrollment status of the students and their

contact with the advisor; and finally, an open-ended item for additional comments or suggestions from the student for improvement purposes. (A copy of the survey form is appended).

Procedures for Treating Data. The hypothesis that was investigated and the statistical procedures that were used included the following:

1. The null hypothesis for this study states: There is no significant difference between the quality of academic advisement as reported by students who attend college during the day and those who attend during the evening hours.

2. The alternative hypothesis for this study states: There is a difference between the quality of academic advisement for day and evening students.

3. The desired level of significance was established at the 0.05 level.

4. The degrees of freedom were computed by the equation of $df = n_1 + n_2 - 2$ based on sample sizes n_1 and n_2 respectively.

5. The independent t test was used to test for any significant mean difference between the two sample groups. For this test, the assumption was made that the sample variances drawn from the popula-

lation were sufficiently similar. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compute the data for the study.

6. For purposes of this study, the critical t value of 1.960 at 0.05 for a two-tailed test was used. A two-tailed test with the area of rejection divided equally (2.050) was applied since the alternate hypothesis did not state a direction of the difference.

7. If the calculated value of t exceeds the critical value of t, the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternate hypothesis will be accepted. It will show that there is a significant difference between the two groups.

8. If the calculated t value does not exceed the critical t value, the null hypothesis will not be rejected and will show that there is no significant difference between the two sample groups.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study consist of an analysis of the two sample groups of students enrolled at Mercer County Community College during the day and in the evening.

The student population sampled consisted of a total of 680. Of this number 601 responses were useable. A total of 338 questionnaires were distributed to students enrolled in the day sections and 263 were distributed to students enrolled in the evening sections. The number of responses returned by students who indicated a majority of classes during the day totaled 430. The number of responses returned by students who indicated a majority of classes during the evening totaled 171. Based on the responses given by the students when indicating their day/evening classification as stated in item #11 on the questionnaire, the majority of the students classified themselves as day students. Therefore, this analysis is based on what the students actually reported in their responses rather than the number of questionnaires distributed for each group.

Table I contains the results of the test for significant mean differences between the two sample groups.

The findings in Table 1 reveal that for item #4, "the advisor discusses my goals and progress toward those goals," the null hypothesis was rejected by the evening students since the computed t value of -2.06 exceeded the critical t value of 1.960 at the 0.05 level of significance, and the alternate hypothesis was confirmed.

In item #8, "does the advisor assist me in my occupational and professional plans," the evening students' responses with a computed t value of -2.22, exceeding the critical t value of 1.960 again rejected the null hypothesis and confirmed the alternative hypothesis.

In item #2, "the advisor helped me adjust to college," and item #7, "the advisor refers me to the proper college offices," the evening students' responses had a greater computed t value of -1.66 and -1.69 respectively, but neither of these were significant enough to meet the 0.05 criterion. In all other responses, the differences were not significant.

TABLE 1

Student Perception of Academic Advisement

Item	Status	N	Mean	SD	Pooled Variance Estimate SE	t	df	2-tail prob.
1. Advisor is approachable; easy to talk to.	Day	375	3.131	0.805	0.042			
	Eve	116	3.069	0.821	0.076	0.72	489	0.473
2. Advisor helped me adjust to college.	Day	369	2.472	0.983	0.051			
	Eve	114	2.649	1.056	0.099	-1.66	481	0.098
3. Advisor is available and on time for appointments.	Day	372	3.040	0.791	0.041			
	Eve	116	2.957	0.838	0.078	0.98	486	0.329
4. Advisor discusses my goals and progress.	Day	373	2.531**	0.977	0.051			
	Eve	114	2.746	0.967	0.091	-2.06*	485	0.040
5. Advisor keeps me up to date on changes.	Day	369	2.352	1.040	0.054			
	Eve	115	2.417	1.043	0.097	-0.59	482	0.558
6. Advisor is knowledgeable about college procedures.	Day	373	3.209	0.826	0.043			
	Eve	116	3.189	0.833	0.077	0.22	487	0.825
7. Advisor refers me to proper college offices.	Day	372	2.637	1.056	0.055			
	Eve	115	2.826	1.020	0.095	-1.69	485	0.092
8. Advisor assists me in occupational & professional plans.	Day	369	2.209**	0.982	0.051			
	Eve	111	2.451	1.077	0.102	-2.22*	478	0.027

*Significant at the 0.05 level (1.96 for two-tailed test). Eve. students reported in a direction not expected by showing t values of -2.06 and -2.22 for items 4 and 8 respectively.

**Eve. students show higher means of 2.7 and 2.5 based on a rating scale of 4 = all the time, 3 = most of the time, 2 = rarely and 1 = not at all. Eve. students reported a higher degree of satisfaction.

Item #12 of the survey asked students to indicate how often they met with their advisor this academic year. Thirty-six percent indicated they met with their advisor only "once." Twenty-nine percent stated they met "twice" with their advisor. Those who met "three times or more" represented only sixteen percent of the respondents. Eighteen percent indicated they "did not meet at all" with their advisor during that given academic year. The results are displayed in Table II for day and evening students.

TABLE II

Students Who Met With Advisor
This Academic Year

Category	Absolute Frequency	Adjusted Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
Once	219	36.3	36.3
Twice	177	29.4	65.7
Three Times	49	8.1	73.8
More Than Three Times	47	7.8	81.6
Not At All	111	18.4	100.0
No Response	2	Missing	100.0
	605	100.0	

Valid Cases 603
Missing Cases 2 (blanks)

TABLE III

Students Who Reported Sources of Information
Most Helpful in Selecting Courses

Category	Absolute Frequency	Adjusted Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
College Catalog	356	59.4	59.4
Pre-Scheduling Booklet	140	23.4	82.8
Classmates	34	5.7	88.5
Advisor	69	11.5	100.0
No Response	6	Missing	100.0
Total	605	100.0	

Valid Casses 599
Missing Cases 6 (blanks)

Item #13 of the survey asked students about the sources of information they found most helpful in selecting courses. Fifty-nine percent indicated the college catalog was the most valuable source of information. Twenty-three percent said the scheduling booklet issued to students during pre-registration was most helpful. Students generally relied less on information from classmates than they did from their advisor. Only eleven percent found the advisor to be the most helpful source of information. The results indicated in Table III include both day and evening students.

A closer analysis of student perceptions was made and classified for each of the eight items on the survey form. Table IV reveals that 35% of the day students felt they could approach their advisor and that the advisor had a generally positive attitude toward advising all of the time. Only 27% of the evening students felt that was the case. The feeling that the advisor was easy to talk with most of the time was shared nearly equally among day and evening students. Only 6% of the day students felt the advisor was not approachable at all, while 14% of the evening students indicated the same.

TABLE IV

Advisor Is Approachable, Easy To Talk With

	Day		Evening	
Category	N	%	N	%
All The Time	148	35%	45	27%
Most of the Time	179	42%	72	43%
Rarely	72	17%	25	16%
Not At All	29	6%	24	4%
Totals	428	100%	166	100%

Valid Cases 594
Missing Cases 11

Among the day students who found that advisors showed a personal interest in their academic success by helping them to adjust to college life, it is revealing that 32% of the day students felt this was rarely the case (Table V). Twenty-nine percent of the evening students felt the advisor was helpful in their academic adjustment most of the time. On the other hand, 20% of the evening students reported that the advisor was helpful all the time while only 17% of the day students indicated the same.

TABLE V

Advisor Helped Me Adjust To College

Category	Day N	Day %	Evening N	Evening %
All The Time	70	17%	34	20%
Most of the Time	125	30%	49	29%
Rarely	136	32%	38	23%
Not At All	92	21%	46	28%
Totals	423	100%	167	100%

Valid Cases 590
Missing Cases 15

TABLE VI

Advisor Is Available And On Time For Appointments

Category	Day N	Day %	Evening N	Evening %
All The Time	117	28%	42	26%
Most of the Time	206	49%	63	38%
Rarely	66	15%	38	23%
Not At All	35	8%	21	13%
Totals	424	100%	164	100%

Valid Cases 588
Missing Cases 17

Table VI reveals that a preponderance of day students, (49%) reported that advisors were generally available and on time for appointments most of the time. Among the evening students only 38% had this perception. The number of respondents who reported that advisors were rarely available and on time, or not at all was highest among the evening students with 23% and 13% respectively.

Among the students who reported that the advisor discusses my academic goals and progress toward those goals, (Table VII) 20% of the evening students indicated this was the case all the time; 16% of the day students felt the same. However, 34% of both groups reported the advisor did so most

TABLE VIII

Advisor Keeps Me Up To Date On Changes

Category	Day N	Day %	Evening N	Evening %
All The Time	64	15%	27	16%
Most of the Time	121	29%	48	29%
Rarely	110	26%	34	20%
Not At All	128	30%	58	35%
Totals	423	100%	167	100%

Valid Cases 590
Missing Cases 15

Table IX reveals that the day students reported a higher percentage (39%) for indicating the advisor's knowledgeability about college procedures all the time in comparison to the evening students (37%). Although the groups were almost equally divided on the rarely category (10% day; 11% evening), the evening students reported a higher percentage (13%) in the not-at-all category.

TABLE IX

Advisor Knowledgeable About College Procedures

Category	Day N	Day %	Evening N	Evening %
All The Time	167	39%	61	37%
Most of the Time	178	42%	65	39%
Rarely	44	10%	19	11%
Not At All	37	9%	22	13%
Totals	426	100%	167	100%

Valid Cases 593
Missing Cases 12

Table X shows that both day and evening students were almost equally divided in the all-the-time category (24% and 25% respectively) and in the most-of-the-time category (32% and 33% respectively). However, the evening students reported a greater percent (25%) than the day students (22%) in the not-at-all category.

TABLE X

Advisor Refers Me To Proper College Office

Category	Day N	Day %	Evening N	Evening %
All The Time	104	24%	42	25%
Most of the Time	133	32%	55	33%
Rarely	94	22%	28	17%
Not At All	95	22%	41	25%
Totals	426	100%	166	100%

Valid Cases	592
Missing Cases	13

TABLE XI

Advisor Assists Me Explore Occupational and/or Professional Plans

Category	Day N	Day %	Evening N	Evening %
All The Time	41	10%	27	17%
Most of the Time	123	29%	40	25%
Rarely	120	28%	40	25%
Not At All	139	33%	56	33%
Totals	423	100%	163	100%

Valid Cases 586
Missing Cases 19

Table XI reveals that only 10% of the day students reported that the advisor assists me in exploring my occupational and/or professional plans all the time. Seventeen percent of the evening students reported the same. In the most-of-the-time and rarely categories, the day students reported a higher percentage (29% and 28% respectively) while the evening students were equally divided in both categories (25% and 25% respectively). Both groups reported 33% in the not-at-all category.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. INTERPRETATION

The purpose of this study was to determine the significant difference between the quality of academic advisement for day and evening students at Mercer County Community College.

With respect to the primary focus of this investigation, it was found that only two significant relationships existed. These findings were especially important in answering item #4, "the advisor discusses my academic goals and progress towards those goals," and item #8, "the advisor assists me in exploring occupational and/or professional plans." There is an obvious relationship between these two items. They both relate to the student's future needs. This finding was revealing because it is often assumed that evening students have identified their own career goals and aspirations, since many of them are already in full-time employment roles and their occupational plans are generally established. However, since the evening students indicated a significant negative response in these two areas, obviously they do want to discuss their goals and look for assistance concerning their occupational and professional plans.

In item #4, the "advisor discusses my goals and progress towards those goals," it must be noted that many college students need stimulation toward activity, particularly in relating their interests, experiences and aspirations. Often students look to advisors to clarify their interests and goals for them. Many students do not reveal or explore effectively their feelings concerning their goals or progress towards those goals. They often look to the advisor as the catalyst for discussion in this area. On the other hand, advisors should become catalysts in building an environment that will assist the student in becoming self-directed in his or her behavior. Many times students are reluctant to communicate or share their personal desires because they feel the advisor really does not have time to listen.

One serious limitation of this study is that students who do not want assistance from an advisor concerning their goals, or occupational and professional plans may evaluate the advisor as "not helpful," particularly since no information was provided to assess students' perceptions of their own needs for help in these areas.

In item #2, the "advisor helped me adjust to college," although not a significant factor in this study, it does indicate that the students in the evening sections perceive this as an important advisor responsibility. On the other hand, advisors may view this as a function

peculiar to the counseling process. This raises the question: Is there a disparity between student and faculty perceptions of the faculty's role in the advisement process? Here, again, a student who does not need an advisor to help him or her adjust to college may evaluate the advisor as "not helpful."

For variable #7, the "advisor refers me to the proper college offices," it must be noted that students are often remiss in stating clearly what their needs are. Again, a students may not require the assistance that a particular office renders, or often expects the advisor to furnish information without knowledge of the student's specific needs.

Based on the specific comments from the open-ended section of the survey, there was a consensus among day and evening students that there is a need for sincere, personal concern on the part of the advisors. Students sense that advisors have negative attitudes towards advising and that they are "too busy" and appear "bothered" to advise them effectively. When these kinds of feelings and attitudes are prevalent among advisees, then it is time for some serious evaluation to take place on a college-wide basis.

This area of misadvisement is another area of common complaint among advisees as evidenced in this study. Misadvisement very often dissuades students from continuing their studies. Misadvisement not only discourages students,

but it is also costly and time consuming, particularly for those students placed into classes for which they may be academically unprepared or too advanced.

The students' negative feelings are further supported in their indication of the sources they found most helpful in selecting courses. For example, in Table II, only 11.5% found the advisor to be the most helpful, while 59.4% relied on the college catalog. To the extent that students met with their academic advisor is also not very encouraging. For example, 36% met once with the advisor, while 18% did not meet at all. Does the fact that more than half of the students in the survey relied on the college catalog tell us something is truly wrong with the way advisors advise students, or does it tell us that students do not take the time to see advisors; that advisors are inaccessible or that students really think they do not need an advisor?

Part of the problem appears to be a discrepancy between what students expect of advisors and what faculty advisors perceive as their responsibility to that role. It is apparent from the evidence in this study that students seem to expect a much higher degree of commitment from the faculty than is presently the case.

The other part of the problem is merely a question of value. To make a quality judgment, it is necessary to be subjective. The students in this study spoke only for themselves based on their own experiences. They did not

speak for the majority. Several did not respond; were they satisfied, dissatisfied or merely indifferent?

An analysis of the results in terms of advisor performance leads to a variety of implications for Mercer County Community College. Faculty advisors without training could affect both the perception and performance of the individual. Advisors who feel negative toward the added responsibility of advising may be inclined to perform this function in a mechanical, matter-of-fact manner. Since faculty are not accountable to the administration, in the strict sense, for advisement activities, no attempt is made to assess the effectiveness of the process.

Faculty who do not receive remuneration are also not encouraged to perceive advisement as an important responsibility; and therefore, not important enough to be considered a priority item. This statement supports Biggs' (1975) contention that "a considerable number of advisors are dissatisfied with the amount of recognition they receive for advising." Borgard (1981) agrees that "faculty are understandingly cool about the notion of advising service because they perceive that advising is never important for professional advancement, nor support the satisfaction of many basic needs." Further justification for the attempt to understand how faculty view advising responsibilities, Mash (1978) contends that "one must go directly to the institution's reward

system. Rarely does advising and the quality of advisee contact enter significantly into the process of evaluating for promotion, merit raises or tenure." Mash believes that faculty should have primary responsibility for academic advising, but it is incumbent upon the institution to develop a system which will allow the faculty to do it well.

Based on the results of this study, students also want to be assisted in exploring their occupation and professional plans, job opportunities and requirements. This finding refutes Borgard's (1981) contention that "one main frustration of many advisors is the sparse knowledge that students care to have of the future world of work or the courses that relate to possible avenues of employment."

In addition to having accurate advisement information, students also expect a much higher degree of accessibility from faculty as well as a positive attitude toward the advising process. In essence, as Grites (1981) noted, interpersonal relationships through the advisement process is particularly important to most students.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the findings from the study:

1. There is a significant difference between the quality of academic advisement for day and evening students for item #4, "the advisor discusses my goals and progress toward those goals." The evening students responded with a negative t value of 2.06.

2. There is a significant difference between the quality of academic advisement for day and evening students for item #8, "the advisor assists me in my occupational and professional plans." Again the evening students responded with a negative t value of -2.22. Both responses were significantly different at the 0.05 level, 1.96 for a two-tailed test. Both responses were reported in a direction that was not expected by the evening students.

Evening students reported higher means of 2.7 and 2.5 respectively in comparison to day student means of 2.5 and 2.4, indicating a greater degree of satisfaction than day students for items 4 and 8. Thus the null hypothesis was not rejected, but the evening student responses were reported in a direction slightly different from day student responses.

3. There is no significant difference between the quality of academic advisement for day and evening students as indicated in the survey responses to the following items:

#1 advisor is approachable, easy to talk with

#2 advisor helped me adjust to college.

#3 advisor is available and on time for appointments.

#5 advisor keeps me up to date on changes.

#6 advisor is knowledgeable about college procedures.

#7 advisor refers me to the proper college office.

4. Based on the written comments in the survey both day and evening students observed that advisors have a negative attitude toward advising.

5. Students in general indicated that there is a lack of sufficient time on the part of faculty to advise students effectively.

6. From the responses reported, there is frequent misadvisement by advisors which is very discouraging to students.

7. In general, students desire a caring, positive working relationship with advisors.

8. Students find the college catalog and the pre-scheduling booklet more helpful to them in selecting courses than the advisor.

8. Students generally are not meeting with academic advisors as often as they should be.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be considered based on the data and findings of this study:

1. Mercer County Community College should investigate advisor perceptions of their responsibilities as advisors to see whether they are compatible with the student perceptions as reported in this study.

2. The College should identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the present system and give directions for change through a needs assessment with input from all academic levels of the institution.

3. A comprehensive advisor in-service training workshop should be developed for those involved with advising on a regular basis. The purpose of such a workshop would be to define the scope, to lay ground rules, to develop strategies and to address the developmental needs of advisors.

4. A peer advising program should be organized, enlisting interested and knowledgeable students as advisor assistants since students often seek advice from other students.

5. An advisement-by-objectives program,similar to MBO (management-by-objectives), should be designed as an individual goal-setting strategy for improving performance and communication with advisees.

6. Mercer County Community College should develop a tangible, meaningful and realistic reward system with an evaluative tool that will recognize outstanding advising efforts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The last item of the survey is an open-ended statement asking for the respondents' comments and/or suggestions. Twenty-two pecent made comments. The majority of these statements fall into three categories: (1) assistance from advisor (2) availability of advisor and (3) misadvisement Most of these comments are negative and reflect unfavorable attitudes towards Mercer's advisement system.

The following are examples of student comments:

Day Students' Comments

Assistance from Advisor

"I feel my advisor is very helpful to me."

"Generally satisfied with my advisor."

"Once when I needed help my advisor couldn't help me. She acted as if she didn't care so now I know what I want to do, and I do it myself."

"My advisor has such a lack of concern for advisees."

"I feel that my advisor show an extreme lack of concern for my future plans. I find her extremely discouraging because she has such a negative attitude toward my scheduling."

"My advisor is not as easy to talk to or get along with with as my counselor is."

"Advisor has too many students on his mind. You should give him/her less students and get more advisors."

"I find that this college is more a do-it-yourself type of institution."

"Advisor felt like he was bothered; that he had to help me."

"Advisor should care; at least act interested."

"Advisors should be more interested and helpful. It's our future."

Availability of Advisor/Time

"Advisor usually difficult to talk with because of her lack of time. Her office hours are during my classes or when I work and she is not willing to see me during other times I am available."

"College needs a full-time general advisor for each major to help people with questions."

"Advisors are assigned too many students to handle; thus time for discussion during scheduling is brief."

"Teachers are busy enough without being advisors in their spare between-class time."

"The teachers do not have enough time to advise; they have overburdening schedules."

"Advisors should be available more hours to help students I don't think being an advisor means letting the student do the work and he/she signs their name."

"My advisor was never there when I went to see her."

"Every time I tried to get in with my advisor, he was busy; my counselor helped me."

Misadvisement

"Advisor incorrectly placed me in algebra class that was too easy; made me waste a semester and money on an unnecessary class."

"Advisors mislead."

"My advisor should help me more appropriately than schedule me for all kind of courses I really don't need."

"He trys to sign me up for classes I don't even want (pushy)."

"I'm not very pleased with the advisors at MCCC. Sometimes they lead students into the wrong classes which waste a lot of time and money."

"When I first came to Mercer. I was put in the wrong class. I had to withdraw and I never did receive the money back. Advisors should take more time in reviewing each person's standing."

"The school system is into more than it can handle. They often mess up students' schedules and the student winds up paying for the course --- get it together Mercer!"

"Advisors should be more informative on curriculum changes and future courses."

"When I approached my advisor, she gave me limited information and misinformed me in reference to my taking MS-110 instead of MA-101."

"I was misadvised last summer and put in two wrong courses. I was never shown my curriculum requirements."

Evening Students' Comments

Assistance from Advisor

"When you enter their office, they act like you are a burden to them, and they just want to hurry you along."

"This institution caters to full-time day students in all areas, ignoring the part-time evening students. The attitudes of the advisors are negative and unresponsive."

"I find the academic advisement system to be superior."

"I think the advisors are willing to assist students, but its the student's responsibility to seek out their advisor."

"My advisor is not too personable towards what I have to say. He goes strictly by the book when I wanted to talk with him about my courses. He didn't care what I really wanted."

"My advisor is very good about helping me when I need it. He really keeps me abreast of changes."

"I haven't spent that much time with my advisor because I have done almost everything on my own, but when I do need him he is there."

"My advisor has been extremely helpful and interested in assisting me."

"Advisors need help."

"I am a part-time matriculated student; I can't begin to tell you who my advisor is."

My advisor did nothing to help in my two years at MCCC. I am graduating late because of her."

"I will be graduating this May, and I have never met my advisor."

"I really don't know who my advisor is. I meet with any of the faculty in my division."

"I would appreciate it if they would give the same attention to night students as day, like announcements, student activities, etc."

Availability of Advisor

"Advisors could be more helpful if they had more time to spend advising."

"Have found when my advisor is not available, no one else is able to help me. There should be one or more persons other than advisor who is familiar with curriculum."

"My advisor is only available Wednesdays. I feel that is not enough."

Misadvisement (None of the evening students addressed this area).

APPENDIX B

MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STUDENT PERCEPTION OF ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Directions: We would like to know your opinion of academic advisement at Mercer so that we may work to improve the advisement system. Please respond to all items as accurately as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

EVALUATION CODE: 4 = all the time 3 = most of the time 2 = rarely
1 = not at all

My advisor:	Response
1. is approachable, easy to talk with and has a positive attitude toward advising in general.	1._____
2. has helped me adjust to attending college and has shown a personal interest in my academic success.	2._____
3. is generally available and on time for appointments.	3._____
4. discusses my academic goals and progress towards those goals.	4._____
5. keeps me up to date on changes in my curriculum or areas of study.	5._____
6. has knowledge about college procedures, scheduling classes, prerequisites required, graduation requirements and other information about college policy.	6._____
7. refers me, when necessary, to the proper college representative, administrative office, counselor or other services within the college.	7._____
8. assists me in exploring occupational and/or professional plans (advanced study, transfer requirements, job opportunities and requirements, etc.)	8._____

Related Information: Please check the appropriate response.

9. I am presently a full-time student with 12 or more credits. 1._____
10. I am presently a part-time student with 11 or fewer credits. 2._____
11. Most of my courses are (Check only one) day: 1._____ evening: 2._____
12. I met with my advisor this academic year (Fall 1983-Spring 1984):
    once: 1._____ twice: 2._____ three times: 3._____
    more than three: 4._____ not at all: 5._____
13. What source of information do you find most helpful in selecting courses?
    college catalog: 1._____ pre-scheduling booklet: 2_____
    classmates: 3._____ advisor: 4._____
14. Your Suggestions or Comments: _____

_____

_____

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